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13 May 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Kennan Thesis: "Adventurism"  
Has Crept Into Soviet Military  
Since Grechko Took Over

1. Mr. Kennan has advanced the thesis that the Soviet military has become a greater political force in the USSR since Marshal Grechko was appointed Minister of Defense in April 1967. Mr. Kennan is convinced that (a) the use of "600,000 men" in the invasion of Czechoslovakia without a political follow-up indicates that the Soviet military was the prime mover of the invasion and (b) that Minister of Defense Grechko played a leading role in the deposition of Dubcek. Mr. Kennan also cites as further evidence of military complicity in the invasion a press article by General Yepishev raising the possibility of armed intervention.
2. Mr. Kennan is correct in asserting that the military's influence in Soviet policy-making has increased in recent years. While this greater influence began with the demise of Khrushchev, the appointment of Marshal Grechko seems to have given new impetus to the military's rise. The post-Khrushchev years have seen an increase of resource allocations to the military, large-scale deployments of strategic weaponry accompanying the rejection of Khrushchev's minimal deterrence posture, and the adoption of a more flexible Soviet military strategy. To justify, in part, the military's position, Grechko and other Soviet military spokesmen have preached a particularly hard line on relations with the West in speeches and press articles.
3. Military efforts have not always been successful, however. These efforts did not prevent, for example, a government decision to discuss strategic arms limitations

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with the US. The cancellation of the May Day military parade, moreover, may have been intended as a rebuff of sorts to the Soviet military.

4. While the military's influence at the present time is quite high, we do not believe that Mr. Kennan's charge of "adventurism" is justified on the basis of the evidence he is reported to have presented.

5. Regarding the Czechoslovakian intervention, there were not 600,000, but approximately 300,000 servicemen employed. It is true that this number is still larger than that engaged in the 1956 Hungarian crisis; we do not feel, however, that Mr. Kennan's comparison is valid. In August 1968 the Soviet Union had a great deal of time to prepare for the operation and was able to select the time for the intervention. The Soviet Union, moreover, certainly wanted to do more than, as Mr. Kennan suggests, "just show the flag." The use of such large numbers of personnel were probably meant to preclude as much as possible armed resistance from the Czechoslovak populace.

6. The absence of a "political follow-up" probably was more a mark of faulty planning accompanied by a change of heart on the part of those Czech leaders the Soviets had counted on to assume the reins of government.


7. Reports of Marshal Grechko's role in the ouster of Dubcek are conflicting. The conclusion that Grechko was sent to emphasize the demands of Semyanov, the Soviets Foreign Ministry representative, appears to have more validity than the assertion that Grechko was given the authority to speak for the Soviet leadership. The possibility that Grechko exceeded his authority is quite possible; he is not known for his tact or reticence.

8. We are not aware of a Yepishev article in the spring of 1968 that raised the possibility of an invasion of Czechoslovakia. Mr. Kennan may, however, have been referring to a report in the French newspaper Le Monde of a 23 April 1968 "meeting of the Soviet Communist Party". Yepishev reportedly then stated

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that the USSR's armed forces were ready to intervene in Czechoslovakia if "faithful" Communists there appealed to the USSR and other socialist countries for help in "safeguarding" socialism in that country. According to Le Monde's report, Yepishev described the current situation in Czech-Soviet relations as one in which such a possibility is not to be excluded. If this report is indeed correct, it seems more a case of contingency indoctrination than of military lobbying.

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